

FOREWORD

Transcript Warning:

All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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Punctuation:

The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

- * * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.
- [?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.
- To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.
- . . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.
- _____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.
- [/] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as /Meeting appears to be breaking up/ or /Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible./

Names:

The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

Preparation:

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the audiovisual research room in the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made.

Dictabelt 4A, Item 4A1

September 1962

JFK: . . . -xi, Mississippi.

Voice 1: Yes, Mr. . . .

[Tape skips and seems to repeat itself.]

JFK: . . . -xi, Mississippi.

Voice 1: Yes, Mr. President.

JFK: Thank you.

Voice 2: Hello. Hello.

[Tape skips.]

JFK: . . . calling if they want to know who's calling.

Voice 1: All right. Fine, Mr. President.

[Pause of 75-80 seconds]

JFK?: Hello.

Voice 3: All right.

JFK: Hello? Hello, Governor?

Barnett¹: All right. Yes.

JFK: How are you?

Barnett: Is this . . .

JFK: This is the president, uh . . .

¹ Ross R. Barnett

[Tape skips and seems to repeat itself. An echo is heard during the next seven exchanges.]

Barnett: Oh. Well, Mr. President, [words unintelligible].

JFK: Well, I'm glad to talk to you, Governor. I am concerned about, uh, this situation, uh, down there, as I know, uh . . .

Barnett: Oh, I should say I am concerned about it, Mr. President. It's, it's, it's a horrible situation.

JFK: Well, now, here's my problem . . .

Barnett: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: . . . Governor.

Barnett: Yes.

JFK: This, uh, listen, I didn't, uh, put him in the university, but on the other hand, under the Constitution . . .

Barnett: [Words unintelligible]

JFK: . . . I have to carry out the orders of the, carry that order out and I don't, I get, uh, I don't want to do it in any way that causes, uh, difficulty to you or to anyone else.

Barnett: [Word unintelligible] . . .

JFK: But I've got to do it. Now, I'd like to get your help in doing that.

Barnett: Yes. Well, uh, have you talked with, uh, attorney general this morning?

JFK: Yeah. I talked to him and, uh, in fact, I just met with him for about an hour, and we went over the situation.

Barnett: Uh, did he and Mr. Watkins² have a talk this morning? Tom Watkins, the lawyer from Jackson, or not?

²Thomas H. Watkins

JFK: Uh, yes, he talked to Tom Watkins. He told me.

Barnett: Yes, sir. Well, I don't know what . . .

[Tape skips and seems to repeat itself.]

Barnett: Well, I don't know what un-, I haven't had a chance to talk with him . . .

JFK: Now just wait . . .

Barnett: . . . [but?] . . .

JFK: . . . just one minute 'cause I got the attorney general in the outer office, and I'll just speak to him.

Barnett: All right.

[Pause of 15-20 seconds.]

JFK: Hello, uh, Governor?

Barnett: Yes. Hold on . . .

JFK: I just talked to the attorney general. Now, he said that he talked to Mr. Watkins . . .

Barnett: Yes.

JFK: . . . and the problem is as to whether we can get, uh, the, we can get some help in getting this fellow in, uh, this week.

Barnett: Yes.

JFK: Now, evidently we couldn't, the attorney general didn't feel that, uh, he and Mr. Watkins had reached any final agreement on that.

Barnett: Well, uh, Mr. President, Mr. Watkins is going to fly up there early tomorrow morning.

JFK: Right.

Barnett: And, uh, could you gentlemen talk with him tomorrow? You . . .

JFK: Yes, I will have the attorney general talk to him and then, uh . . .

Barnett: Yes.

JFK: . . . after they['ve?] finished talking I'll talk to the attorney general, uh. . . .

Barnett: [All right?].

JFK: . . . on the phone and then if he feels it's useful for me to meet with him . . .

Barnett: I thought . . .

JFK: . . . I'll do that

Barnett: I thought they were making some progress. I didn't know.

JFK: Well, now, uh . . .

Barnett: I couldn't say, you know.

JFK: . . . he and, if he and Mr. Watkins, they can meet tomorrow. Now, the difficulty is, uh, we got two or three problems. In the first place, what can we do to, uh, if we ca-, if. . . . First place is the court's order to you, which I guess is, you're given until Tuesday. What is your feeling on that?

Barnett: Well, I want . . .

JFK: What's your position on that?

Barnett: . . . to think it over, Mr. President.

JFK: Right.

Barnett: Uh, it, it's a serious matter, now I want to think it over a few days. Until Tuesday, anyway.

JFK: All right. Well, now let me . . .

Barnett: Uh, you . . .

JFK: . . . let me say this, uh . . .

Barnett: . . . know what I am up against, Mr. President. I took an oath, you know, to abide by the laws of this state . . .

JFK: That's right.

Barnett: . . . and our constitution here and the Constitution of the United States. I'm, I'm on the spot here, you know.

JFK: Well, now you've got, uh . . .

Barnett: I, I've taken an oath to do that, and you know what our laws are with reference to . . .

JFK: Yes, I understand that.

Barnett: . . . and, uh . . .

JFK: Well, now we've got the . . .

Barnett: . . . we have a statute that was enacted a couple of weeks ago stating positively that no one who had been convicted of a crime or, uh, whether the criminal action pending against them would not be eligible for any of the institutions of higher learning. And, uh, that's our law, and it seemed like the Court of Appeal didn't pay any attention to that.

JFK: Right. Well, of course . . .

Barnett: And . . .

JFK: . . . the problem is, Governor, that, uh, I got my responsibility, just like you have yours . . .

Barnett: Well, that's true. I . . .

JFK: . . . and my responsibility, of course, is to the . . .

Barnett: . . . I realize that, and I appreciate that so much.

JFK: Well, now here's the thing, uh, Governor, I will, uh, the attorney general can talk to, uh, Mr. Watkins tomorrow. What I want, would like to do is to try to

work this out in an amicable way. We don't want a lot of people down there getting hurt . . .

Barnett: Oh, that's right.

JFK: . . . and we don't want to have a . . . You know it's very easy to . . .

Barnett: Mr. President, let me say this. They're calling, calling me and others from all over the state, wanting to bring a thousand, wanting to bring five hundred, and two hundred, and all such as that, you know.

JFK: I know, well the . . .

Barnett: We don't want such as that.

JFK: I know. Well, we don't want to have a, we don't want to have a lot of people getting hurt or killed down there.

Barnett: Why, that's, that's correct. Uh, Mr. President, let me say this. Mr. Watkins is really an A-1 lawyer, an honorable man, has the respect and the confidence of every lawyer in America who knows him. He's of the law firm of Watkins & Eager. They have, they've had an "A" rating for many, many years, and, uh, uh, I believe this, that that he can help solve this problem.

JFK: Well, I will, uh, the attorney general will see Mr. Watkins tomorrow, and then I, after the attorney general and Mr. Watkins are finished then, uh, I will be back in touch with you.

Barnett: All right. All right. I'll appreciate it so much, now, and, uh, there. . . . Watkins'll leave here in the morning, and I'll have him to get into touch with the, uh, attorney general as to when they, he, he can see him tomorrow.

JFK: Yeah, he'll see him and, uh . . .

Barnett: Yes, sir.

JFK: . . . we will, uh, then you and I'll be back and talk again.

Barnett: All right.

JFK: Thank you.

Barnett: All right.

JFK: Okay.

Barnett: I appreciate your interest in our poultry program and all those things.

JFK: Well, we're . . .

[JFK laughs softly.]

Barnett: Thank you so much.

JFK: Okay, Governor. Thank you.

Barnett: Yes, sir. All right now.

JFK: Bye now.

Barnett: Thank you. Bye.

[Phone hangs up.]

[Short pause.]

Voice 1?: Yes, sir. Are you through?